



COUNCIL PRESIDENT TONY YOUNG

CITY OF SAN DIEGO – COUNCIL DISTRICT 4

Press Release

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Contact: Jill Esterbrooks
(619) 517-1113

City Leaders Launch ‘Connecting to Careers’ Initiative *Efforts focus on closing San Diego’s workforce skills gap*

SAN DIEGO – San Diego is grappling with a skills gap.

While San Diego’s unemployment is at 9.3 percent, there are almost 57,000 unfilled jobs as employers struggle to find qualified workers for in-demand occupations.

The divide means that companies have a harder time expanding because it is costly and time-consuming to recruit from outside the region and it translates into more San Diegans looking for meaningful work.

To better prepare San Diego’s workforce now and in the future, Councilmember Sherri Lightner is spearheading “Connecting to Careers,” an initiative designed to bring all the stakeholders together to highlight the city’s training needs.

Lightner, who chairs the newly created Council Committee on Economic Development and Strategies, said workforce training is a key component to ensuring a strong local economy.

“We need to work together to get San Diegans working,” said Lightner. “Too often there is a disconnect between the public, training providers, educational institutions and our local businesses when it comes to what job skills we need to foster.”

Connecting to Careers is about starting a dialogue so that businesses and education and training providers are working to collaboratively to ensure training and education programs match up with actual demand.

To start that conversation, Lightner – joined by Council President Tony Young and Councilmember Lorie Zapf - today hosted a roundtable discussion with some of San Diego’s biggest employers along with representatives from San Diego State University, UC San Diego, San Diego Community College District and San Diego Workforce Partnership, which funds a wide variety of training programs in the region.

Mark Cafferty, president and CEO of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, said the skills gap is real and needs to be addressed with a collaborative approach.

Right now, job demand data often lacks specifics, he said. For instance, it may be obvious computer specialists are in demand, but what kind of specialists – whether it be Java programmers or cloud developers – often is not.

“Companies need to help inform our schools and training providers about their real-time and future needs to ensure they will have the type of employees they need to grow their businesses,” Cafferty said.

Council President Tony Young, who sits on the Workforce Partnership Board, said the city needs to focus on all aspects of workforce development from improving K-12 education to retraining unemployed or underemployed workers for jobs in growing industries.

“Councilmember Lightner is rightly putting a spotlight on one of San Diego’s most pressing needs – workforce training,” Young said. “A well-trained and educated workforce means it is easier to retain, grow and attract companies here.”

As part of the Connecting to Careers initiative, Lightner will be sponsoring a number of events in the coming year, including a training fair this summer. The event will highlight both the most in-demand skills as well as connect students and job seekers with the proper training and educational programs.

Lightner also plans to host a series of “Skill Sets Sessions,” panels focused on growing industry sectors such as biotech, cleantech and manufacturing to help identify current gaps and develop programs and curriculum to address them.

Lightner plans to collaborate with the Workforce Partnership and the EDC to create a website that serves as a one-stop shop where students and job seekers can find out about the most in-demand jobs and all available training programs.

“Right now, there are all these great programs out there that many in community know nothing about,” she said. “We need to make it easier for San Diegans to find out about the skills they need and how to get them. It’s a simple but important step in closing the skills gap.”

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